



For Immediate Release – August 4, 2006
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National Stop On Red Week Targets Red Light Running

The Arizona based Red Means Stop Coalition has joined forces with the Governor's Traffic Safety Advisory Council (GTSAC) and the National Campaign to Stop Red Light Running in proclaiming August 6 – 12 as National Stop On Red Week.

"Arizona continues to be one of the most dangerous U.S. states for red light running" said Leslie Blakey, Executive Director of the National Campaign to Stop Red Light Running. *"However, National Stop On Red Week is the perfect time to publicly recognize the many local communities that have established red light photo enforcement programs to reduce red light running violations, crashes, injuries and fatalities."*

According to the U.S. Federal Highway Administration and the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, nationally, there are an average of 222,000 crashes; 191,000 injuries and 842 fatalities as a result of red light running. The Arizona Department of Transportation reports in 2005, Arizona motorists were involved in 8,349 crashes that resulted in 7,494 injuries and 80 fatalities.

“In Arizona, there are too many senseless crashes and fatalities as the result of drivers trying to beat a red light”, said Richard Fimbres, Director of the Governor’s Office of Highway Safety, and an executive member of the Governor’s Traffic Safety Advisory Council. “Through the efforts of GTSAC, and organizations like the Red Means Stop Coalition, we are working diligently at educating the public about the dangers of red light running. People need to remember when the light is red, it means stop – not speed ahead.”

A new law becomes effective September 21, 2006, increasing certain red light running penalties from civil to criminal. Arizona Revised Statutes 28-672 has been amended. A person who violates this statute, causing serious physical injuries or death, is guilty of a class 3 misdemeanor which includes jail time. Under new statutes 28-675 and 28-676, a person who runs a red light or stop sign causing serious physical injuries or death while operating a motor vehicle with a revoked, suspended or illegally obtained driver license is guilty of a felony.

“These welcomed changes to the red light running laws are long overdue” said Frank Hinds, Executive Director of the Red Means Stop Coalition. “The new laws were brought about by the persistent efforts of the family of Ricky Smith, a young Gilbert man killed in April 2005, by an undocumented immigrant driving without an Arizona driver license.”

The Red Means Stop Coalition is the only known volunteer, grass roots organization of its kind attempting to reduce red light running by providing education and awareness programs in schools and businesses throughout Arizona. *“A red light is not a suggestion; courteous, responsible drivers save lives”* Hinds said.

Additional information and statistics are available at www.redmeansstop.org.

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